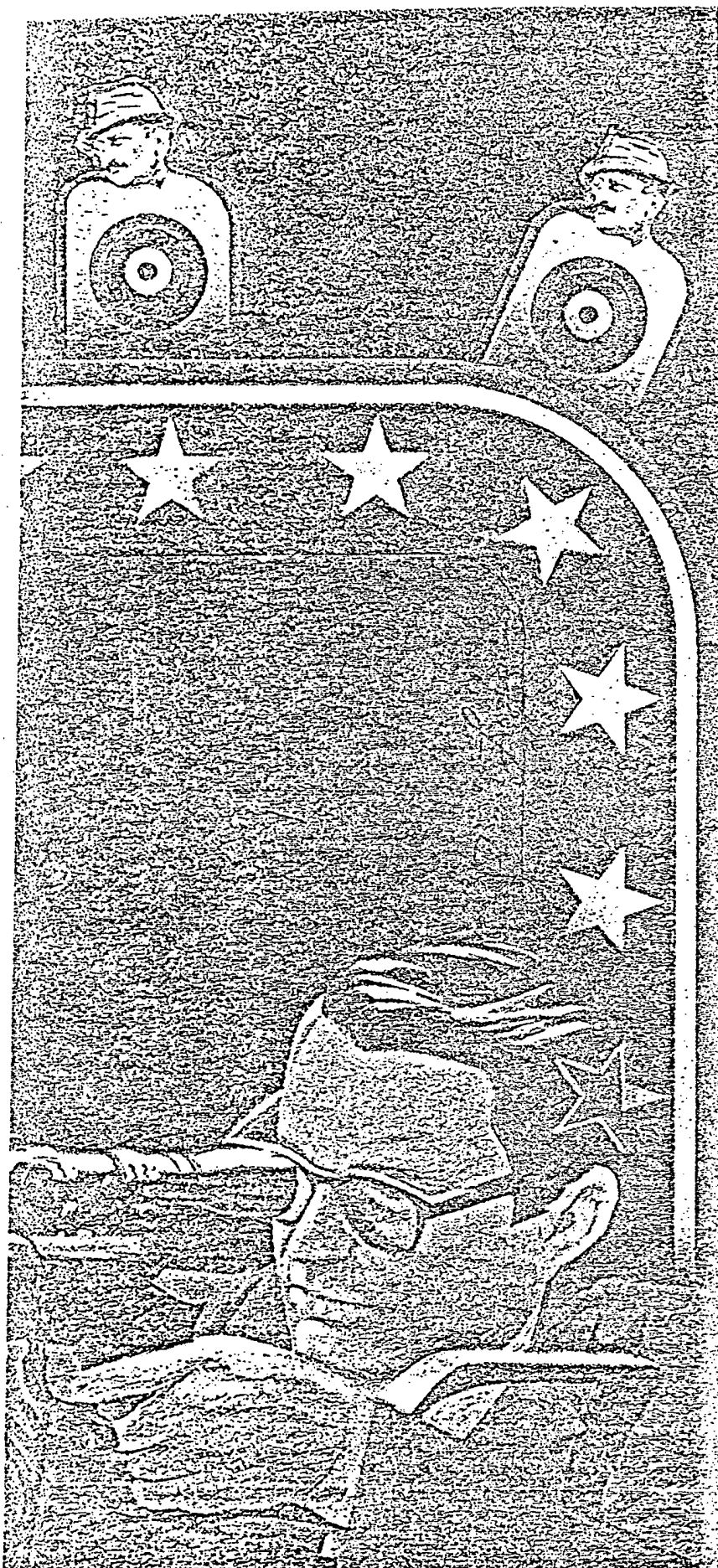


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# CIA'S TOP GUN: A Warrior at Bay

BY ANDREW ST. GEORGE

IN an earlier, cornier era he would've been dubbed a "mystery man"—Mitchell Livingston WerBell III, this cheery, ruddy, ramrod-straight former secret service officer with the opaline, bloodflecked eyes of the Miura fighting bull, who has been a shadowy, enigmatic presence in America's innermost corridors of power for a generation. He has been called an inventor of genius and he is that: WerBell has designed the world's best muzzle silencer and so many other James Bond gadgets of the space-age espionage trade that he is regarded as the "master armorer of the C.I.A." Competitors in the international armaments trade call him, enviously, a "supersalesman" and WerBell has served as chairman, president and chief executive officer of several worldwide corporations whose sales of "ultra-sophisticated special weapons" is in the millions of dollars. But WerBell is more than a creative industrial tycoon; as a member of the Secret Team, the mysterious association of powerful clandestine operators who plan behind the scenes and act in silence, WerBell has participated in covert activities which changed the destiny of small nations from Guatemala to Thailand, the outcome of civil wars or of elections whose results went against Washington's wishes. "We must have the capability to carry out executive action" WerBell used to say with conviction—"executive action" being the longtime C.I.A. code name for political assassination projects—until one day he discovered his closest associate, and ultimately himself, to be the targets of a mysterious, menacing "executive action."